

From: Ross Baker
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 12/12/01 2:40pm
Subject: Microsoft settlement comment

Hello,

As a person deeply involved with computer matters, I find the proposed settlement disturbing. I have no animosity towards Microsoft, per se. In fact, I made a rather significant amount of money off Microsoft stock from 1992 -- 1999. I made this money because I came to realize at that time that Microsoft's control of the underlying operating system of all IBM PC-compatible computers gave them an insurmountable advantage over all application vendors that chose to use the IBM PC platform.

This has not changed. In fact, the snowball is rolling downhill. Microsoft used its operating system dominance as a lever to dominate office productivity applications and suites. With that done, it uses proprietary file formats to ensure the maintenance of that situation.

Now Microsoft is trying to use its dominance on the PC-platform to control network protocols and, ultimately, the Internet itself. It is likely to succeed if not restrained.

These systems should, for the public good, be based on published, public specifications.

I feel that it is imperative that any just settlement require Microsoft to make freely available complete and accurate specifications of all its application programming interfaces, file formats, and network protocols. There is no great intellectual magic to these things. They are only critically important because the sheer dominance of Microsoft gives them importance. Once this is required of Microsoft then it is my hope that we will see a more level playing field and that protocols will no longer needlessly proliferate. At this time much extra work is done simply because Microsoft's advantage increases if it generates new, proprietary methods for doing things that are already being done successfully with open standards. This is NOT in the public interest and only serves to help maintain and extend Microsoft's monopoly positions.

I hope you will give my thoughts at least their due consideration.

Thank you,

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Ross Baker -- Devices for the Future

>>In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.

-- George Orwell